



**2025 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: SB 599 - Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program - Funding
COMMITTEE: Senate – Budget and Taxation Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: SB 599 would require the Governor to include a \$5M appropriation for the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program in the annual budget bill for FY27 through FY29.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) submits a Letter of Support for SB 599. This funding is critical to maintaining the county level system of care for behavioral health. MACHO provides the following examples of how the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Grant Program supports essential services throughout the state:

In Allegany County, this program funds the Urgent Care Coordination program, which provides access to three appointments with a licensed mental health provider and psychiatric nurse practitioner. This proactive approach prevents unnecessary emergency department visits by offering immediate assessments, medication management, and seamless aftercare planning. It also supports Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to equip law enforcement officers with the specialized skills and knowledge required to respond to mental health crises compassionately and effectively. By diverting individuals with mental health and substance use disorders from the criminal justice system to appropriate treatment, the CIT program promotes public safety.

This funding supports mobile crisis services in numerous jurisdictions across the state, providing crucial intervention for individuals in crisis and reducing demands on emergency services and law enforcement. Calvert County relies on this funding to provide critical crisis services, including a mobile response team and urgent care options. As a rural community, these funds are critical to 24/7 operations. In FY24, Calvert's crisis programs delivered 4,850 services and are on track to exceed that number in 2025. This funding has contributed to an ongoing reduction in fatal overdoses, with only 11 recorded in 2024.

St. Mary's County has utilized this funding to support its Health Hub, which provides access to a variety of health and wellness services, including harm reduction, crisis counseling, basic healthcare needs, and mobile crisis services.

This funding is vital to sustaining these and other important local health department behavioral health crisis response programs serving our communities across the state. Without funding, these services will be discontinued with severe and detrimental consequences for our residents. People would no longer be able to access needed services, resulting in increased emergency department utilization, longer wait times, and a greater reliance on law enforcement intervention without specialized training. These outcomes would strain existing resources and undermine efforts to create compassionate and supportive communities. Communities and LHDs rely on this funding to achieve shared objectives.

For these reasons, MACHO submits this Letter of Support for SB 599. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-937-1433. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*